

U.S. World Politics HealthWatch MoneyWatch Entertainment Crime Sports

U.S.

Survey: Transgender inmates more likely to be victims of sexual assault

By Jordan Kinsey
July 31, 2015 / 3:27 PM EDT / CBS News

In a first of its kind survey of the federal and state inmate population in America, data shows that transgender individuals are nine times more likely than other inmates to encounter sexual harassment or assault within 12 months of admission.

The National Inmate Survey (NIS) administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found 35 percent of transgender inmates held in prisons and 34 percent held in jails experienced one or more incidents of sexual assault at the hands of facility staff or other inmates in a one year period.

The National Inmate Survey, released last month, collected information directly from inmates on the prevalence of sexual assaults. It provides the best assessment yet of the number of transgender inmates who have been victimized in the nation's prisons and jails, according to the Bureau.



Be the first to know

Get browser notifications for breaking news, live events, and exclusive reporting.

[Watch CBS News](#)

Caitlyn Jenner, formerly Bruce Jenner, captiv...

Christopher D'Angelo, 39, knows firsthand about that victimization. As an inmate at the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office jail in Phoenix, he says he was harassed by fellow inmates and humiliated by jail staff for being transgender.

"I was laughed at, ridiculed, and even the butt of many officer's jokes," he said.

D'Angelo, who spent six months in the Arizona jail after being charged with assault with a deadly weapon, was born a female. But he underwent partial gender reassignment surgery and even had a legal name change. Yet, the facility staff did not acknowledge him as the man he said he was and felt.



Be the first to know

Get browser notifications for breaking news, live events, and exclusive reporting.

On his first day in jail, D'Angelo recalls several male and female officers entered his cell demanding to know his gender for placement.

"Because I didn't tell them, they ended up storming in my cell and throwing me down and ripping my clothes off," he said.

He was placed in the women's unit and officers continually referred to him as "she" or "ma'am."

"I'm legally male," he said. "I went through the courts. I already got issued a new birth certificate with my name."

For five and a half months, D'Angelo says he also endured unwanted sexual advances from a fellow inmate, despite repeated complaints to the staff.



Be the first to know

Get browser notifications for breaking news, live events, and exclusive reporting.

owards me," he said. "She
er cell. She would say she

When asked for comment on D'Angelo's allegations, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office told CBS News they are investigating the claims.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, transgender inmates are especially vulnerable and often are targets of sexual violence behind bars because they are housed in facilities that do not correspond with their gender.

"[T]hey are either placed in general population where they are targets for abuse by other prisoners or kept in solitary confinement ostensibly for their own protection but where they become the frequent targets of abuse by staff," said Chase Strangio, an ACLU Staff Attorney who works on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning issues.

The NIS was compiled using data collected anonymously from the nation's inmates between 2007 and 2012 about their experiences behind bars, including sexual violence. More than 92,000 adult inmates participated in the survey, according to the BJS. Of those, 230 inmates identified as transgender--101 in state and federal prisons and 129 in jails.



Be the first to know

Get browser notifications for breaking news, live events, and exclusive reporting.

...plete, asked participants about their gender identity and sexual orientation along with other specific

information. The respondents selected the categories that apply to them.

Allen Beck, a statistician with BJS, said that until now it was difficult to measure sexual assault rates of transgender inmates because it was such a small segment in comparison to the general population.

"It was only until 2012 that we had sufficient bodies of interviews to provide those estimates," said Beck.

By distributing surveys over the five year span, BJS was able to pinpoint assault rates.

Among the National Inmate Survey findings:

- Transgender inmates reported high levels of staff sexual misconduct in prisons (17%) and jails (23%).
- About a quarter of transgender inmates in prisons (24%) and jails (23%) reported an incident involving another inmate.
- 74 percent said the incidents involved oral, anal, vaginal penetration, hand jobs, or nonconsensual sexual acts.
- More than 40 percent of transgender inmates said they were physically injured by the staff perpetrator.

The BJS has been under congressional mandate to carry out a yearly review of data known as The Prison Rape and a on sexual victimization and nt to the Department of Justice to deter prison rape.



Be the first to know

Get browser notifications for breaking news, live events, and exclusive reporting.

fresh on his mind, D'Angelo is ecting the transgender his story and is now working

with prison rights advocates.

Next year, the BJS will release a more in-depth report about the circumstances and relationships surrounding sexual victimization in prisons and jails.

In: [Rape](#) [Prison](#) [Sexual Assault](#)

© 2015 CBS Interactive Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Featured

Trump On Due Process

Tomato Recall

2025 NBA Playoff Schedule

2025 Kentucky Derby

Follow Us On

YouTube

Facebook

Instagram



Be the first to know

Get browser notifications for breaking news, live events, and exclusive reporting.

More on CBS News

[Newsletters](#)

[Podcasts](#)

[Download Our App](#)

[Brand Studio](#)

[Sitemap](#)

Company

[About Paramount](#)

[Advertise With Paramount](#)

[Join Our Talent Community](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)

Copyright ©2025 CBS Interactive Inc. All rights reserved.